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Democratization via Elections in an African "Narco-state"? The Case of Guinea-Bissau

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Abstract

Recent development cooperation with Guinea-Bissau, focusing on good governance, state-building and conflict prevention, did not contribute to democratization nor to the stabilization of volatile political, military and economic structures. The portrayal of Guinea-Bissau as a failed "narco-state", as well as Western aid meant to stabilize this state, are both based on dubious concepts. Certainly, the impact of drug trafficking could endanger democratization and state-building if continued unchecked. However, the most pressing need is not state-building facilitated by external aid that is poorly rooted in the social and political fabric of the country. Rather, it is grassroots nation-building that is a pre-condition for the creation of viable state institutions.

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Zusammenfassung

Demokratisierung durch Wahlen in einem afrikanischen ‚Drogen-Staat'?
Das Beispiel Guinea-Bissaus

Die bisherige Entwicklungszusammenarbeit mit Guinea-Bissau, die auf gute Regierungsführung, Staatenbildung und Konfliktprävention fokussiert war, hat weder zur Demokratisierung noch zur Stabilisierung der anfälligen politischen, militärischen und ökonomischen Strukturen des Landes beigetragen. Die Charakterisierung Guinea-Bissaus als gescheiterter „Drogen-Staat" basiert ebenso auf fragwürdigen Konzepten wie die Entwicklungshilfe westlicher Geberstaaten. Sicherlich können die Auswirkungen des internationalen Drogenhandels die Demokratisierung und Staatenbildung des Landes gefährden, wenn nichts dagegen unternommen wird. Die dringendste Aufgabe ist jedoch nicht die Staatenbildung, gefördert durch eine nur unzureichend an die sozialen und politischen Bedingungen angepasste externe Hilfe. Viel dringender als Staatenbildung ist die Herausbildung eines tief in der Bevölkerung verwurzelten Nationalgefühls, das die Basis für die Entstehung funktionierender staatlicher Institutionen ist.

Democratization via Elections in an African "Narco-state"?
The Case of Guinea-Bissau

Dirk Kohnert[1]

Article Outline

1 Introduction: The Early Elections of June 2009—A Step towards Stabilization?

The political history of independent Guinea-Bissau (RGB) is characterized by an intimate merger of its military and political elite. For decades, the military has had a strong historical legitimacy in the view of the people because of its decisive role in the liberation war. The army did in actual fact fight a people's war, which greatly contributed to its success. Heroes of the liberation struggle like 'Nino' Vieira continued to be the political and military leaders following their victory over the Portuguese colonial powers in 1974. Although the military led the people's struggle for national liberation, it gradually turned into a major factor in the destabilization of the democratization process. Guinea's politico-military elite became in-

creasingly detached from the population, particularly in terms of democratic legitimation and government revenue. By the late 1990s, net official development aid already constituted about half of the country's GNP (Rudebeck 2001: 10-11). In addition, the search for easy money and reliance on external financial resources contributed to the gradual criminalization of state institutions and members of the power elite—first by involvement of rank and file of the army in weapon trafficking, notably with their neighbors in the Casamance, southern Senegal (cf. ICG 2008); and later on by involvement of the power elite in global drug cartels.

Nevertheless, at the grassroots level, notably in the countryside, villagers continued to be dedicated to democratization as they envisioned it, i.e. empowerment and a voice in the control of their own resources (cf. Klute et al. 2008; Rudebeck 2001). Ethnicity (e.g. the question of Balante under-representation) played a significant role in the emic view, most notably because it was instrumentalized by the urban power elite, notably in the army, for its own interest. Yet, the principles of the struggle for liberation, as represented by the ideals of solidarity, equality and multiculturalism, were (and still are) so deeply engrained in the population that the image of cultural diversity as a major platform for nation-building from below still prevails (Rudebeck 2001: 29; Temudo 2008).

The states' lack of integration into the socio-cultural fabric of the nascent nation was most pronounced and visible in two spheres, which were really just two sides of the same coin. First, were the fragile formal state structures inherited from colonial times, which hardly improved after independence (cf. Forrest 2003; Schiefer 2002; Klute et al. 2008). Second, was the 'uncaptured' peasantry on one side, and the emergence of a stratum of poverty-ridden urban poor on the other, which were at least partially created by ill-conceived neo-liberal structural adjustment programs of the Bretton Woods Institutions (cf. Forrest 2003; Rudebeck 2005; 2001).

As a consequence of the growing gap between government and the people, Guinea-Bissau has been ridden by political instability, a bloody civil war (1998-99), and numerous coups or coup attempts. In fact, no elected president in the country's history has served his full mandate (cf. EU EOM 2009: 3). The actual degree of this instability was highlighted on the night of the first and second of March 2009 with the assassination of the Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Batista Tagme Na Waie, and just hours later, the apparent retaliatory assassination of President João Bernardo 'Nino' Vieira. Originally highly popular brothers-in-arms during the liberation war, they became arch-enemies later on. This most recent political crisis showed to what extent the Guinean state had been undermined and corrupted by longstanding internal feuds of the politico-military power elite—a process obviously stimulated by transnational networks of drug and weapon traffickers.

In order to prevent a power vacuum, the interim government, with assistance from the international donor community, was at pains to re-establish law and order with the calling of early presidential elections. The prevailing view inside and outside the country was that

Guinea-Bissau was in dire need of a functioning state—and not just for the good of the country itself. [1] The quest for a stable state also served the interest of global Western players in fighting terrorism and in encouraging the stability of the entire West African sub-region, which has already been labeled the "Pandora Box of Africa". This was one of the reasons why the European Union and other donors were prepared to finance and observe the elections—it was a means for legitimizing the new government and the formal structures of democracy established with the first multi-party elections in 1994. Even so, election assistance was just one of a variety of attempted measures pursued by the international donor community in the last decade to help prevent the outbreak of new violent conflicts and to assure a functioning state. This view has been underscored by the expertise of scholars in international relations who have argued that free and fair elections are vital for post-conflict stability and development (cf. Akopari/Azevedo 2007).

Unfortunately, there were few if any lessons learned from the outcome of previous measures, similarly designed to effect a significant turnaround in Guinean politics. One could rightly ask whether the election, as well as its subsequent legitimization by several international election observation missions (UN, EU, AU, ECOWAS, UEMOA, IOF, etc.), was an electoral façade without any positive impact on institution building, particularly considering that many of the same major political and military actors are still involved in the exercise (cf. Monteiro/Morgado 2009: 2)[2]. Hitherto, most democratization aid for RGB has been of limited success. EU electoral assistance in the country's last legislative elections in November 2008, for example, had apparently little if any positive impact on the functioning of the current political system. Just three months after the parliamentary elections, which were highly praised by international observers for their exemplary role in assisting democratization (cf. ICG 2009a: 5; EU-EOM 2008), the underlying political-military conflicts culminated in the assassination of several top political and military leaders. The perpetrators have yet to be brought to justice.

The EU, in a business-as-usual manner, nevertheless extended its program of electoral assistance for the early presidential elections of June 2009. On June 5, 2009, the eve of the electoral campaign, further high ranking politicians, among them a presidential candidate, were killed. Others were abducted or persecuted[3]. The Attorney General received repeated death

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[1]   "Stressing the importance of the upcoming presidential election in Guinea-Bissau of 28 June 2009, and the need to have free, fair and transparent *elections as a crucial and necessary step* towards the full return to constitutional order, consolidation of democracy and national reconciliation." (UN-SC 2009b, italics DK).

[2]   Cf. also Issa K. Barry: 'Guinée Bissau: Pourquoi ils ont fait tomber le bonnet rouge'. L'Observateur Paalga, July 31, 2009 (Editorial): "Beaucoup d'observateurs de la scène politique se demandent légitimement à quoi servira ce passage forcé aux urnes tant qu'il n'y a pas la paix dans les cœurs. Si ce n'est à choisir le prochain mouton de sacrifice."

[3]   Baciro Dabó, an independent presidential candidate despite being a member of PAIGC as well as the Minister for Territorial Administration, was slain at his home in Bissau on the eve of the electoral campaign, allegedly because he resisted a detention order (cf. here and in the following ICG 2009:6-7; EU-EOM preliminary report

threats (the latest in August 2009) because he tried to hunt down the culprits of the March killings; he no longer dared to sleep at home. Apparently unimpressed by this "climate of insecurity, intimidation and fear" (EU EOM 2009: 3), or because they thought they had no alternative, the donors, led by the UN and the EU, continued to assist the formal state structures by financing and supervising the early elections on July 28, 2009. Probably for diplomatic reasons, international election observers shut their eyes and not only attested to a well-organized, peaceful and orderly voting process, but they also judged the elections to be "free, fair and transparent" in general, and declared them an "important step towards achieving political stability and security" (UN-SC 2009a: 2, 3, 11). Their biggest complaints were mainly directed at general voter fatigue and the subsequent low turnout (about 60 and 61 percent of the electorate in the first and second round, respectively—the lowest since the introduction of multi-party elections in 1994[4])[5]. In the second round of voting on July 26th, the candidate of the ruling PAIGC (Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde; the former socialist unity party), Malam Bacai Sanha, won with more than 63 percent of the votes, followed by his rival former President Mohamed Kumba Yalá (candidate of the Partido para a Renovação Socia Social, who garnered 37 percent (cf. EU EOM 2009; UN-SC 2009a). Yet the

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2009:3, 7). In the same vain former Defense Minister Helder Proença was killed along with two of his bodyguards. Apparently he and Dabó had been accused by José Zamora Induta, the interim Army Chief of Staff, of being responsible for a coup attempt. Supposedly there were misgivings in high military circles that if elected, Dabó, a close ally of murdered president Vieira, would prosecute the masterminds behind the extra-legal killings of the President and his Army Chief of Staff. A second presidential candidate, former Prime Minister Faustino Imbalí, was beaten up and kidnapped by soldiers that same day. A third candidate, Pedro Infanda, leader of the Ecological Party (LIPE), withdrew on March 23, 2009 after having already been beaten by soldiers. Still another presidential candidate, Paulo Mendonca, demanded in vain for the adjournment of the elections, citing constitutional stipulations that call for postponement if any of the candidates dies. Due to overriding concerns, the Supreme Court rejected his request.

[4]   ECOWAS and AU monitors reported (like the EU-EOM) "Eleições transparentes mas com visível cansaço dos eleitores." However, they noted "de uma maneira geral que houve um certo cansaço dos eleitores," tendo acrescentado "porquê votar se a escolha será a mesma?." A União Africana (UA), com 16 observadores saudou igualmente um escrutínio "livre, transparente e equitativo." (Noticias Lusofonas, 28.07.09). - Similarly, RGB's national radio stations blamed the low voter turnout on the political class' bankrupted credibility, as well as on the similarly disappointing lack of new political ideas. Campanha eleitoral sem debate de ideias pode aumentar abstenção: "A campanha eleitoral para a segunda volta das presidenciais na Guiné-Bissau está a ser marcada pela ausência do debate de ideias o que pode aumentar a abstenção, referiram à agência Lusa vários directores de rádios guineenses. [...] Há um candidato que se sente confortável com a vitória, fazendo a leitura dos resultados da primeira volta, e não se dá a grandes esforços para tentar convencer o eleitorado com propostas," referiu. ... Para Nelo Regala, a abstenção representa igualmente que as "pessoas deixaram de acreditar na classe política. [...] É o cartão vermelho que o povo está a mostrar aos nossos dirigentes sobre os assassinatos que assistimos na Guiné-Bissau." (www.noticiaslusofonas.com, 20.07.09).

[5]   "The relative high percentage of invalid votes in the 1st round (3.6 percent, DK) could be explained by the fact that the voting lists still included the names of the two murdered presidential candidates; votes for them counted as 'invalid'" (cf. EU-EOM 2009 prelim report). – On general voter motivation in RGB cf. also Sangreman et al. 2008.

question remains whether any lessons were learned, or alternatives explored, following this conventional method of assisting democratization and state-building.

The general quest for "good governance" and a functioning state in Africa has been a controversial issue, at least in international scholarly discussion. Whereas the majority of political scientists, politicians and aid experts deplored the weakness of the state in many African countries in general, and in RGB in particular, and called for the rapid installation of functioning state structures, others continue to contest this approach. Based on concepts of cultural African primordialism (cf. Chabal/Daloz 2006; Bayart et al. 1999; Reno 1998) or of the African "shadow state" (Ferguson 2006), followers of the latter position point out that political leaders in RGB can be replaced without effecting any political change, thus rendering Western-style democratic elections increasingly inappropriate. According to these authors, formal multi-party elections, as well as national government itself, became increasingly irrelevant to the majority of its citizens, most notably in the countryside. The state lacks basic functions and guarantees. It doesn't assure a monopoly on violence nor impartial jurisdiction, or legal prosecution. Simply put, it doesn't provide any real tangible benefits for the people (cf. Bordonaro 2009: 36; Vigh 2009). According to this view, a political setting has evolved in RGB in which power politics are not allocated within state institutions, but rather outside via neo-patrimonial political alliances rooted in the country's troubled history, as well as in trans-national social spaces, including global drug trafficking (cf. Bordonaro 2009: 3; Monteiro/Morgado 2009: 2).[6]

Unfortunately, both theoretical positions apparently address only half of the truth. On the one hand, advocates of "failed state" theories tend to ignore both the reality of informal politics that prevails across West Africa, as well as the Euro-centrism of their "one size fits all" concepts (e.g. structural adjustment and formal democratization via multi-party systems and competitive elections). On the other hand, the primordialist position (and its equivalent, the post-structuralist imaginaire) follows uni-dimensional concepts of path dependency that tend to ignore the chances for development provided by innovative cultural traits, such as cultural nationalism and the cultural basis of nation-building. As a last resort, they often lean on methodological essentialism, which is based on stereotypes rather than robust empirical evidence (cf. Meagher 2006, for a more detailed and scathing critique of the latter position). Surprisingly enough, grass-root patriotism developed to a considerable extent, even in Guinean villages or the diasporas of migrants in European capitals (cf. Gable 2009: 175-78).

In my view, the most pressing need is not state-building facilitated by external aid that is poorly rooted in the social and political fabric of the country, but rather nation-building from below as a pre-condition for the creation of viable state institutions. In past decades, a new nationalism has taken root in RGB and elsewhere in Africa. It shows remarkable differences,

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[6]   "[…] But as the experiences of Nino Vieira and Luiz Cabral [and Kumba Yala, D.K.] showed, the main risk to the country's stability came from the practice of governing outside the country's institutional frameworks." (ICG 2008: 15).

both in its origin and in its impact, when compared through the lens of national independence movements, as has been shown in detail already elsewhere (cf. Kohnert 2009; 2008a). Contrary to the "first" nationalism, the "second" is more prone to excluding populations—alienation, xenophobia and its political instrumentalization are its curse. The new nationalism has been shaped decisively by the consequences of globalization and by the increasing cleavage between rich and poor (cf. Barry et al. 2007 on poverty and income distribution). Nowadays, the structures of nationalism and nation-states differ more than in the past. The new nationalism is frequently rooted in populist grass-root movements that do not necessarily share the same interests as the ruling class or the state. This makes for its extraordinary political and social ambiguity and brisance. In short, while nation-building is a basis for sustainable state-building, there is also the question of democratic sequencing. This should not be interpreted as rigid path dependency, but rather as a series of interrelated factors that can reinforce one another under favorable conditions, and block development under adverse circumstances. In any case, the sequence approach (or a gradual- or twin-tracked simultaneous approach) should not rely too heavily on the formal conditions of democracy, most notably "good governance" and rule of law, or on other formal democratic institutions as promoted by Western development aid and backed by scholarly expertise (cf. Branch/Cheeseman 2009). This holds true particularly for the initial take-off phase. Rather, it should encompass and exploit the wealth of endogenous socio-cultural heritage as the building blocks of nation-building and enduring democracy.

2   Is Guinea-Bissau a "Narco-state"? Drug Trafficking and Its Impact on Politics, Economy, and Society

In the past decade, West African governments were challenged by an upsurge in transnational drug trafficking from Latin America, destined for European markets. The trafficking often follows already-established routes for migration and illegal international small-arms trade. It is periodically adapted to changing requirements for the avoidance of international observation and persecution. Among other reasons, this is related to a gradual shift of the cocaine market from the USA to Europe—notably from Colombia (via Brazil and Venezuela) to Western Africa—due to higher profits for trafficking with Europe (cf. Bybee 2009: 6, 11-13).[7] Cocaine enters European markets mainly via Spain and Portugal because of their long coastlines and linguistic and historic ties with Latin America. At least 33 tons were seized (often accidentally) on the West African route to Europe between 2005 and 2007 (cf. Johansen 2008: 4-5; UNODC 2007a; Mazzitelli 2007: 1075, 1087; Labrousse et al. 2008: 10-11; UNODC 2007: 9-

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[7]   This is mainly due to decreasing effective demand in the USA and the depreciation of the US dollar relative to the Euro. "According to U.N. figures, two pounds of uncut cocaine can now fetch as much as $45,000 on the streets of Europe, as opposed to less than half that price ($22,000) in the U.S." (Kirschke 2008).

15). This was almost certainly just the tip of the iceberg; due to its clandestine nature, the trade is difficult to quantify. UNDOC estimated that some 40 tons, or 27 percent of cocaine consumed in Europe annually until 2007, transited West Africa (cf. Johansen 2008: 5)[8].

Whereas Nigeria and Ghana were renowned centers of drug trafficking in the 1990s, in the past five years Guinea-Bissau has also become a regional hub for the cocaine trade. Three outstanding seizures aroused the attention of international observers. In September 2006, the police arrested two Colombians in Bissau accused of trafficking 670 kg of cocaine, which was found at their home. Within hours of the arrest, military officers forced the police to hand over the confiscated drugs in order to transfer it to a crumbling Treasury building, where the consignment disappeared some days later. On the orders of the Attorney General, a local judge released the accused without legal explanation, and the case was temporarily shelved.[9] The case was reopened a year later because of the alleged involvement of high-ranking army officers and senior government officials in the disappearance of the drugs (cf. UNDOC 2007: 6). In April 2007, another consignment of 635 kg was seized in a vehicle driven by a civilian accompanied by two soldiers. But the traffickers still escaped with 2.5 tons, which had been transported to an abandoned military airstrip at Cufar near the southern city of Catio. The soldiers were released because they were assumed to be hitchhikers who were "simply in the wrong place at the wrong time," as Army spokesman Col. Asenio Balde later declared (cf. Vulliamy 2008: 4). On July 12, 2008, another clandestine plane from Venezuela landed at Bissau's international airport and was immediately cordoned off by military personnel. Its cargo was loaded onto vehicles and driven to an unknown destination. The army once again blocked a judicial investigation (cf. US-HRR 2009).

In short, cocaine in transit had obviously been stockpiled in Guinea-Bissau on an increasing scale by Colombian drug cartels since 2004, apparently in cooperation with members of the army and high-ranking politicians. It was then shipped to Europe, either by boat or overland via Morocco, or flown in by "mules", i.e. couriers with about 0.8 kg each hidden in their stomach or luggage. In order to overcome law enforcement at departure and destination, a so-called "shotgun" method was often applied. In December 2006, the police at Amsterdam's Shiphol Airport, detected in a single flight 32 "mules" (mostly Nigerians) with cocaine from Guinea-Bissau (cf. Vulliamy 2008: 3). In August 2007, the Guinean Air Force announced closer surveillance and the deployment of anti-aircraft artillery to some of the 88 islands of

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[8]   Due to the increasing awareness of national and international authorities and subsequent measures of control, cocaine trafficking through West Africa has probably decreased by about 50 percent since 2007. However, it could be that this apparent reduction was merely due to redirected deliveries, either via Guinea-Conacry (cf. UN-SC 2009a: 6) or toward new lucrative "middle-of-nowhere" transit hubs in the Saharan desert, as recent evidence from Mali indicates (cf. Boisbouvier, C. "Le Boeing de la coke." Jeune Afrique, 22 November 2009: 35). In any case, even lesser shipments amounting to some 20 tons (valued at about $1 billion at destination) would still have a destabilizing impact on regional security and economy (UNODC 2009: 17).

[9]   For detailed accounts of these and other outstanding cases cf. Dabo 2007; Walt 2007; Pinto/Pereira 2007; Vulliamy/Ferrett 2008; cf. also Vincent 2007; IRIN 2007; Vernaschi 2009.

the Bijagos archipelago. The area was an assumed hot spot for cocaine transit due to its remote location, lack of surveillance, and multiple landing reports of suspicious small aircraft (cf. UNDOC 2007: 9). However, high-ranking officers of the armed forces continued to intervene in narcotics investigations conducted by the judicial police. In 2008, the Justice Minister, Attorney General, and Director of Judicial Police received death threats in response to their stance against drug trafficking (cf. US-HRR 2009: 1). Jose Americo Bubo Na Tchuto, the Navy Chief of Staff suspected of involved in trafficking, was suspended in August 2008 after an alleged coup attempt. He was kept under house arrest, but subsequently escaped to neighboring Gambia. The 2009 political crisis that followed the assassinations of Army Chief of Staff Gen. Batista Tagme Na Wai, and President João Bernardo 'Nino' Vieira, was mainly due to increased factionalism within the military. It was also probably linked to the surge in organized drug trafficking, in which former Navy Chief of Staff Na Tchuto, an accused coup-plotter living in self-imposed exile in Gambia, was also likely involved (cf. ICG 2009: 1, 3-4).

The "Narco-state"—Facts and Fiction behind a Biased Concept

Under these conditions, Guinea-Bissau had seemingly become the African country most immersed in the drug trade (cf. Ellis 2009: 191). For some scholars and politicians, it has become the textbook example of the first African "Narco-State"[10] (cf. Kirschke, 2008: 1; Bybee 2009; Johansen 2008: 4). State failure has been identified as the country's key problem. The grossly insufficient administrative and political structures, which impede the effective control of the territory and the combat of drug trafficking, endanger more than the consolidation of the peace process in Guinea-Bissau. According to the United States and other global players such as the UN and concerned international NGOs, these issues also posed a potential new threat to global security, because drug money is said to be closely linked to small arms proliferation and the financing of international terrorism.[11] Organized crime, drug trafficking and terrorism are seen as the "new Achilles' heel of West Africa" (cf. Andrés 2008). Hence, on June 25, 2008, the UN Security Council urged the government in Bissau to stop the trafficking and to "strengthen its international and regional cooperation to fight the narcotics trade and organized crime plaguing the country" (Panapress, July 7, 2008). For the International Crisis Group (ICG, Brussels), one of the leading think tanks on conflict analysis and prevention, state fail-

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[10] A "narco-state" has been defined as: "an area that has been taken over and is controlled and corrupted by drug cartels and where law enforcement is effectively nonexistent. It is hard to deny that Guinea-Bissau is Africa's first 'Narco-State'" (cf. Bybee 2009: 18). Using the example of Tajikstan, West gives a detailed description of the structures of a "narco-state" (2006: 10-11).

[11] According to the renowned Brooking Index of State Weakness, RGB is among to the most vulnerable countries worldwide, liable to pose serious transnational security threats. The country ranks in the lowest 20th percentile of so-called "critical weak states", ranking 18 out of 141 developing countries, between Burma and Ethiopia (cf. Rice/Patrick 2008: 16-17). The Fund for Peace and Foreign Policy initiative ranked RGB 27th out of 37 states indexed as "failed states" with an acute security alert in 2009 (cf. Fund for Peace 2009).

ure is at the root of the recurrent political crises and proliferation of criminal networks in Guinea-Bissau. The ICG sees a real risk for the country becoming a "narco-state" attractive to drug barons as well as terrorist networks in the Maghreb.[12] According to its analysis, no political leader since independence has really attempted to establish the necessary structures for a functioning democratic state. ICG experts maintain that only the implementation of effective state institutions and the regulation of political competition (no longer entrenched in the guerrilla mentality generated by the struggle for liberation but built instead upon a functioning multiparty system) could end the current political crisis and provide a basis for sustainable development in Guinea-Bissau. Consequently, ICG strongly advised the international donor community to urgently support efforts to consolidate democracy, reform the security sector and construct viable state structures (cf. ICG 2008: 1, 24; ICG 2009).

However, international endeavors to assist RGB's democratization process that are guided by the "failed" or "narco-state" concept are likely to fail as well. An increasingly critical scholarly review of the concept revealed that it is heavily biased in several aspects (cf. Call 2008; Hameiri 2007; Bøås/Jennings 2007; Groves 2008; Hagmann/Hoehne 2009). First, its political use is often inherently based on the global player's perception of security, such as in states like Afghanistan, Sudan and Somalia, which have been labeled as "failed" and where the breakdown of formal institutions has been perceived as a threat to Western security interests.[13] Others with similar deficiencies, such as Angola and the Ivory Coast, have been assisted as long as they continue to provide an enabling environment for international capital or hegemonic foreign policies.[14] Secondly, the focus of the "failed state" concept on state capacity (most notably on order and security as represented by the assumed five "core institutions" of the state—military, police, civil service, justice and government—but without due regard to other equally important political factors such as equality, empowerment or human rights) disregards important possible tensions and trade-offs in promoting state-building (cf. Call 2008: 1496-1497). If state reconstruction is analyzed in technocratic terms, where a blanket remedy—namely "order"—is assumed to be a cure-all for very different illnesses, it is likely to ignore the political economy and social nature of state- and nation-building, as reflected in the differing natures of different regimes (cf. Hameiri 2007: 122; Call 2008: 1497-1498).

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[12] According to Antonio Mazzitelli, the West African representative to the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime, trafficking is only part of the menace. "Certainly the major threat that drug trafficking or all other transnational organized crime introduces into the West African scenario at-large is the possibility of hijacking and influencing the democratic process. […] Thanks to the enormous financial and corruptive power of this money, this is a major concern in a country like Guinea-Bissau." (Latham 2009; cf. Mazzitelli 2007: 1087).

[13] Since 2002, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, there was a remarkable shift in the US National Security Strategy, which concludes: "America is now threatened less by conquering states than by failing ones." (quoted by Call 2008: 1491).

[14] For detailed examples cf. Bøås/Jennings (2007).

Alternative methodological approaches to statehood in Sub-Saharan Africa center around concepts of a 'shadow state' (Ellis 2009: 195), "para-statal institutions" (cf. Trotha 2000), and the (re-)emergence of non-state political orders (Klute et al. 2008: 17-19)—all of which are inseparably interwoven into somewhat stable forms of the so-called modern state. Yet, only the latter corresponds to the generalized notion of statehood still prevailing in the Western concept of "failed states". The alternative concepts mentioned above refer to the particular history of state-building in Africa. This is most notably the case in the age-old dualism between customary and colonial rule, which has been reinforced by the practice of indirect rule and its continuing repercussions, particularly in Anglophone Africa. This also implies transnational informal power networks and institutions of governance at all levels, from the district council to the state house in the capital. Most often these deeply rooted but clouded political structures are hidden from the view of Western politicians (and even from that of many scholars). Nevertheless, they are by no means a relict of the past restricted to remote rural areas, but rather are very much alive and continually transforming and reinventing themselves anew.[15]

3 Is Increased Aid the Most Promising Way to Turn Around Failed States?

Even the introduction of multiparty democracy along with relatively strong core state institutions would not guarantee peace and sustainable development in RGB. Democratization is likely to fail if primordial informal politics are allowed to prevail unchecked. Such was the case with the once-applauded and heavily assisted socialist development path that was so popular with so-called progressive donors in the 1980s (cf. Schiefer 2002; Kohnert 1988). This was even the case with the so-called the model example of the Benin Republic—a highly praised "lighthouse" of democratic renewal in Africa that nonetheless showcased the futility of formal democratization if pursued within a deeply rooted and revered socio-cultural framework of patronage and rent-seeking (cf. Bierschenk 2009). Under these conditions, additional development assistance (ODA) in countries that as highly aid-dependent as RGB[16] (so-called aid orphans) can be easily transformed into a "sovereign rent" situation[17] for the political-administrative and military elites. In fact, RGB's power elite has increasingly relied on sovereign rents from aid and illicit trade, e.g. fishery, drugs, weapons (cf. Schiefer 2002). Thus, in the worst-case scenario well-meant but ill-applied aid can produce (and probably already has) similarly devastating effects on the democratization process (i.e. sovereign re-

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[15] Cf. Klute et al. 2008; Chabal/Daloz 2006, and their critical review by Meagher 2006; Sassen 2000; and Schiefer 2002.

[16] About 80 percent of Bissau's state budget is derived from ODA (cf. Einarsdóttir 2007: 105). The country is second only to the Comoros on the list of most dependent countries worldwide, receiving on average (1970-1999) the equivalent of almost 14 percent of GDP as aid (cf. Djankov et al. 2008: 173).

[17] For a definition cf. Collier 2006: 1484.

source rents including illicit rents from criminal networks and drug trafficking) by making patronage politics financially feasible, which in turn inevitably derails the democratization process (cf. Collier 2006: 1484).

Paul Collier and others, however, maintain that aid does not necessarily constitute a sovereign rent and therefore is not likely to have effects akin to resource rents. They consider international technical assistance, closely supervised within the framework of political conditioning, as the most promising way to fund "turnarounds" and to address the problem of "failing states" (cf. Collier 2006: 1492-1496). But there is no robust proof that aid doesn't act in a way comparable to resource rents; successful grassroots empowerment depends on the methods of implementation. Even the *ex ante* governance conditionality of aid failed utterly because it did not sufficiently consider the informal structures of the "shadow state". This reality also applies to the case of RGB, where aid, unsupervised for decades by any political system of checks and balances on behalf of Guinean citizens, has degenerated into the equivalent of sovereign rent (cf. Djankov et al. 2008; Schiefer 2002; Kohnert 1988). Although international donors' rhetoric of aid conditionality has stressed time and again the need to curb aid for poor performers like RGB, additional development assistance has continued on a substantial scale. The donor community has been increasingly concerned about the opportunity costs of non-intervention (cf. Einarsdóttir 2007: 107-108), and not just with respect to the perceived needs and interests of the local population, but also in view of Western global security and regional stability concerns (cf. above). Aid strategies based on these concerns and focused on the technocratic aspects of formal institution building, do not necessarily have the desired impact on empowerment or democratization from below, which is the *ne plus ultra* of sustainable development in Africa (cf. Crawford 2009).

Nation-building as a Pre-condition of State-building?

International calls for the building of a strong state in RGB (cf. ICG 2008) miss the point: The most pressing need is not state-building without regard to its firm anchorage in society and economy, but nation-building from below as the basis for duly legitimized and sustainable democratic state institutions. The dubious regime created and sustained by Nino Vieira was detached from the majority of the population and based on "narrow power networks" faithful to the ruler (cf. Forrest 2002:261; Temudo 2008:248). This contributed to its overthrow and subsequent near-irrelevance. Nation-building reflects the strive of a political community and its struggle for freedom, justice and democracy, with the ultimate end of conquering the commanding heights of state power as the political sovereign. Therefore, nation-building often precedes state-building. Incidentally, it is doubtful whether nation-building has ever been on the agenda of African states in the first place (cf. Chipkin 2007:35). Whereas nation-building was certainly a major point on the agenda of Amilcar Cabral and Guinea's liberation movement in the early 1970s, it was surely not one of the priorities of subsequent heads of

state. Nevertheless new national identities, including a common Creole language and a truly national Guinean culture, have developed from below independent of official politics (cf. Mourao 2009: 95-100; Augel 2007; Rudebeck 2001; Augel/Cardoso 1996). The Guinean people still share a basic feeling of national identity, reinforced by the armed struggle against colonial domination and based on a common and unifying tradition, including shared language, culture, custom and religion—in short, the basic cultural infrastructure of belonging to a nation (cf. Chipkin 2007: 200-205; Rudebeck 2001).

However, Africa's new nationalism[18] is not necessarily a 'project' restricted to the interests of the deprived: it has been shaped decisively by the consequences of globalization (including transnational networks of drug and weapon trafficking) and by the increasing cleavages between rich and poor (cf. Dorman et al. 2007). This is a reality that should not be ignored if democratization efforts are to be successful. The political history of citizenship is closely and increasingly linked with accelerated mobility and migration enforced by globalization. This also provides a basis for the counteracting "politics of belonging" instrumentalized by particular political elites for their own advantage. There are several examples from other African countries, as shown by the recurrent outbursts of xenophobia in South Africa, Côte d'Ivoire, and elsewhere. Bissau is certainly not spared from this risk, as the rancor against bi-national Cape Verdeans after independence, as well as the recent strife between Gambian and Senegalese petty traders and their Guinean counterparts, has demonstrated. States may even collapse entirely without disappearing as nations from the social imagination, as Crawford Young rightly observed in his theoretical contribution to a journal edited by Sara Dorman, Daniel Hammett and Paul Nugent (2007: 241).

4   Conclusions: Guinea-Bissau Is in Need of Nation-building from Below as Basis for the Reconciliation of the Urban Power Elite's Warring Factions

A reorientation of aid and transnational norm-building networks aimed at empowerment of the people could have considerable impact on nation-building and reconciliation of warring factions of the political and military elite in Bissau. However, increased technical assistance and financial aid by the international donor community does not necessarily foster the required turnaround. To be sustainable, future development assistance to RGB requires a reorientation of overall aims. Global concerns about stability and security should be balanced against the pressing need for nation-building via bottom-up democratization and the integration of cherished informal political and economic institutions into a revised state structure. A piecemeal but painstaking democratization of the fabric of informal politics, including chieftaincy and a meaningful decentralization policy from below (cf. Crawford 2009;

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[18]   Cf. Kohnert 2008a; 2009 for a definition of the concept of 'new nationalism' and its repercussions for the analysis of current development in Africa and elsewhere.

Klute et al. 2008), is required to lay the foundation for a functioning democracy at the grass-root level that could eventually lead to a more responsive government. In short, nothing can replace the political struggle for real democracy from below.

As Lars Rudebeck (2001) aptly summarized in his study of democracy's sustainability in RGB, more complex power structures need to be addressed, including those far beyond the multi-party system and other conventional election procedures. In this respect a Sovereign National Conference, following the Benin model (cf. Adamon 1995; Banégas 1995; Heilbrunn 1993), could serve as a spark for igniting a true democratization process that necessarily addresses the substantial and innovative social and political impetuses for real empowerment.[19] However, this would only hold true if the political class and civil society institutions in Bissau take all necessary precautions to avoid the negative aftermath following the betrayal of the results of the Sovereign National Conferences in Lomé by the ruling class in the 1990s (cf. Nwajiaku 1994). Due consideration should be paid also to the lessons learned from the similar but less sustainable Guinean exercise of a National Conference after the civil war in 1999. In this respect, the most recent endeavor of the Guinean Parliament, backed by the UN, the National Institute of Studies and Research (INEP, Bissau) and the Portuguese branch of the international NGO Interpeace (Aliança Internacional para a Consolidação da Paz) to generate civic peace initiatives (Voz di Paz, created in 2007)[20] and to convey a National Conference of Reconciliation, could be a step in the right direction. On its agenda are the identification of the causes of conflicts in RGB, the contradictions between state and civic institutions, and conflict prevention strategies. In addition to representatives from various government departments, civic and religious organizations, veterans, women, youth and the media are also invited to participate (cf. UN-SC 2009a: 2, 11). However, the National Conference apparently won't be sovereign, and therefore risks irrelevance much like RGB's innumerable other eloquent but aloof top-down measures for democratic transition or reconciliation.

A successful outcome requires not just "good governance" in the sense of international donors' concerns, but also the incorporation of democratic discourse and institutions at the local level. In order to be sustainable, this must be accompanied by substantial economic improvements in the livelihood of ordinary citizens.[21] Democratization alone will not satisfy the

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[19]   A Sovereign National Conference as a basis for meaningful democratization and stabilization should not be confused with pledges by established political leaders to install a "national conference", issued for example by the acting president Malam Bacai Sanhá of the *Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde* (PAIGC) in the presidential elections of 2009 (cf. resolutions and demands of the *Conferência Nacional de Diálogo*, Bissau, 25 to 26 May 2009 (Lusa, 26.05.09; 'Declaração de Bissau'). The latter runs the risk of helping to consolidate established political structures, as demonstrated by similar events in the history of independent RGB.

[20]   For details cf. website: www.interpeace.org/index.php/Guinea-Bissau/Impact/Results.html (02.12.09).

[21]   The cost of rice, a basic staple food in RGB, increased on average by 20 to 30 percent over the past year (cf. UNSC-2009a: 8), although the government has tried in vain for decades to provide affordable supply of basic food for the poorer sections of the population.

basic needs of the people, as there is no guarantee that it will lead automatically to bottom-up economic growth (cf. Robinson 1994: 610).[22] Altogether, the proposed new focus of aid and national politics would likely be more effective when it comes to establishing enduring peace, security and democratization, as opposed to the pursuit of multiparty democracy and formal institution-building by foreign aid without due regard to the underlying informal political setting and its hidden vested interests. This is not to say that economic post-conflict recovery strategies are necessarily futile. But they make sense only as complementary measures, and they should differ from standard approaches of economic development and poverty reduction in that they stress reintegration of ex-combatants, job creation for young men, and deep cuts in military spending (cf. Collier 2009).

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[22] For recent examples of studies on the linkage of democratization and economic development with a focus on Africa cf. Rodrik/Wacziarg 2005; Nel 2005; Ndulu et al. 2008. Yet, robust quantitative evidence on the linkage is lacking. In view of the predominance of informal political and economic institutions in West Africa, hypotheses or theoretical substantiation on this linkage, based on chronically imperfect quantitative data on economic growth in Africa, are challenged for methodological reasons (cf. Kohnert 2008 for more details).

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